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REPORT ON HANFORD GROUNDWATER PROJECT

AVAILABLE The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office and Bechtel Hanford, Inc. (BHI) released the Semi-Annual Report to Congress on Hanford's Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project.

The report, covering October 1999 through March 2000, provides an overview of the Integration Project's progress to protect the Columbia River from contaminants in Hanford's groundwater and vadose zone (area between ground level and the groundwater).

The Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project was launched in late 1997 to create a site-wide focus on contaminants, both radioactive and chemical, slowly migrating towards the Columbia River. It has focused the attention of a wide variety of outside experts and stakeholders with a large range of expertise, opinions and concerns on the issue. Independent review of the Project comes from a committee of the National Academy of Science and a panel of nationally recognized experts from academia and private industry.

Because of the importance of the work, Congress requested a semi-annual report to help them stay abreast of the Project. And, although directed to Congress, the report also provides an update for DOE decision-makers, stakeholders, regulators, Tribal Nations and the State of Oregon.

The report can be found on BHI's Internet site at www.bhi-erc.com/vadose/info.htm. Copies of the report may also be obtained by contacting Karen Strickland, BHI, on (509) 372-9236.

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Historical Note: The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office manages the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. Hanford was established during World War II as part of the top secret Manhattan Project to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Weapons material production was halted in the late 1980s. The Hanford Site is now engaged in the world's largest cleanup effort to deal with the legacy of radioactive and hazardous wastes that resulted from the plutonium production era. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology regulate Hanford's cleanup program under a long-term compliance contract called the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement sets the framework and timelines on the cleanup work so that

Hanford meets environmental standards. Hanford cleanup is focused on three outcomes: restoring the Columbia River Corridor for other uses, transitioning the Central Plateau to long term waste treatment and storage, and putting Hanford resources to work for future opportunities.

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